

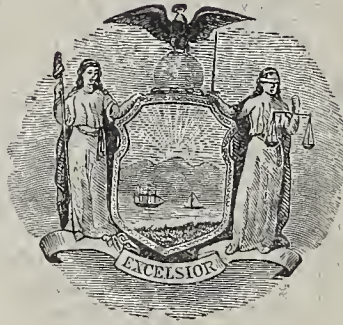
Autumn Day



“Go forth under the open sky and list to Nature’s teachings.”—*Bryant.*

STATE OF NEW YORK

Department of Public Instruction



ARBOR DAY ANNUAL

MAY 5, 1899

“Come forth unto the light of things
Let Nature be your teacher.”—*Wordsworth.*

To school officers and teachers

THE legislature of the state has made it incumbent upon you to arrange for the proper observance of Arbor day, and that which the law enjoins, the interests of every part of the state demand. The preservation of our forests, and the multiplied production of trees have great influence upon the material welfare of our entire population. The destruction of the forests has robbed our lakes and rivers, our smaller streams and canals, of needed water, has seriously affected the regularity of rainfall, and consequently has been detrimental alike to our manufacturing, our commercial and our agricultural prosperity. Arbor day emphasizes the need of the state to protect her citizens from the greed of those who not only injure the people's property, but destroy the beauty of lake, and river, and stream, and rob our scenery of one of its richest charms.

Experience proves that Arbor day also exerts potent influence for good upon the hearts and lives of children; that in planting and caring for flowers, shrubs and trees, and in protecting the birds, children take lessons from nature, and are led by pleasant paths into happy experiences through which both homes and schools are made brighter and better.

The state and nation will always receive beneficent returns from the right observance of Arbor day. Honor to our country's flag, obedience to law, performance of duty are taught by the exercises in which the schools engage. Patriotic citizenship is always in demand. The debt we owe to our state, and to our country rests on every one. How to pay that debt by loyal fidelity, by unflinching devotion, by self-sacrificing zeal in their service, is one of the grandest lessons our children can be taught. Within the year past, citizen soldiers have poured out their blood and laid down their lives to uphold the honor of the state and nation. Others are now facing death on the battlefield or from disease in tropical climes, in their country's service. To insure like patriotic sacrifice should future emergency demand it, pupils now in our schools must be trained for citizenship in a land worthy of their noblest efforts, their highest ideals, their purest and most unselfish love. Officers called to this great trust, it is our high privilege to promote the welfare of our state and country by faithfully performing every duty to the schools under our care.

As the years go by let us hope that Arbor day will more and more prove an incentive to the study of nature, of truth, and of humanity.

Your obedient servant,

A large, elegant handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Charles R. Kinner".

State Superintendent

Superintendent's letter to the children of the public schools

Dear boys and girls of the Empire state:

Again the returning season brings our Arbor day. For the past two months the thermometer has kept a pretty lively war record as the two great forces of heat and cold contended. Spring demanded that Winter, who had wrought so many forms of beauty in the various parts of our state, should now withdraw and leave the sovereignty to Summer, but Winter's reply was, "If Summer possesses the land she must work for it." The sun sent forth some of his scouts, the merry sunbeams, who diligently though silently worked to establish Summer on her throne.

We have been watching this warfare. For a long time the heat seemed to make no impression on this ice-bound world of ours, but by and by the snows began to melt, the little streams were released from their icy fetters, later the frozen waters of the large rivers and lakes could no longer withstand the warm influences and they, too, melted. Then all the moisture in the ground began to circulate and the earth grew warm. The winds became gentle and soft and everywhere a new life was stirring. Nature is a wonderful worker and no one can watch her and learn of her ways without realizing that she has much to teach that cannot be found in books. Men and women once thought that all education came through the study of books, but now we understand that one may know a great deal of books and yet have missed the best things in education. Too many people go through the rounds of their daily occupations without seeing the beauty that not only brings cheer but gives wisdom. Such persons do not know how to aid nature in keeping the world beautiful, but often do injury to trees, plants and shrubs. They are unconscious of the power that lies in a lovely flower, a stately tree, or a graceful vine, to influence life and mould character.

Arbor day has come again to remind us that we can do something to make the scenes about us more attractive. Trees, shrubs and plants will be put into school grounds and in a few years many a school yard, which now is desolate, will be transformed into a place which all will admire. When you have done your part well, nature will do the rest. As soon as the branches of the trees begin to spread themselves, even a very little, the birds will come and when they are sure that they can stay safely, nests will be built in your trees. In a school yard in this state squirrels play on the same ground with the children with no fear of harm. I hope that you will keep the birds about your school-house and that some time you will learn from Audubon, who loved and studied birds, of their interesting life. A few flowers will bring the bees, and on the trees and among the vines and shrubs curious insects will appear. If you were to know just a little of how they live and what they do, you would be ready to sing with Robert Louis Stevenson,

"The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

That this Arbor day may greatly add to your love of nature and to your interest in her wonderful ways is the wish of

Your sincere friend,


State Superintendent

Suggestions

Arbor day exercises should be as far as possible the outgrowth of some feature of the regular school work. Very little good can result from the saying and doing of things which spring into existence with a few days of preparation. Some definite plan should be followed during the spring months to make Arbor day the natural expression of the thoughts and feelings of pupils. Lessons in geography, drawing, and nature study may become means to this end.

A knowledge of the kinds of trees, descriptions of the groves and woodlands, which the children are accustomed to see will awaken interest. Extend this interest to the forests of the state of New York and have the pupils read such descriptions of forest scenes as may be found for instance, in Cooper's "Leather stocking tales." Stories of wood nymphs, the god Pan, Proserpine, the Druids and the oaks, help to strengthen the bond between man and nature. Encourage pupils to tell how the school-house and grounds might be made more attractive to them. This question of adornment will furnish good subjects for essays.

As has already been said, the lasting influence of Arbor day depends largely upon the kind of preparation which teachers and children put into their lives during the spring months. The enthusiastic expression of an intelligent interest in nature may become the means of beautifying many a spot that man has thoughtlessly disfigured.

It is not necessary to confine all the planting to the time allotted to it in the Arbor day program. The planting season extends over several weeks, and odd moments before and after school hours may well be used for the planting of whatever the children bring for the purpose.

Suggestive programs

- 1 Opening exercises — Reading from the Scriptures or other appropriate writings
- 2 Reading of the Arbor day law
- 3 Song
- 4 Superintendent's letter to school officers and teachers
- 5 Recitation — "May" - - - - - *Frank Dempster Sherman*
- 6 Reading — "Common flowers" - - - - - *Anonymous*
- 7 Recitation — "A Laughing chorus" - - - - - *Emerson*
- 8 Song (patriotic)
- 9 Superintendent's letter to the children of the public schools
- 10 Two descriptions of near-by woods by two pupils
- 11 Recitation — "The tree" - - - - - *Björnstjerne Björnson*
- 12 Essay or address — "The Forests of New York"
- 13 Recitation — "Bob White" - - - - - *George Cooper*
- 14 Marching song
- 15 Planting of trees or shrubs
- 16 Closing song

- 1 The announcement of the season by a little girl and little boy. The girl recites Wordsworth's poem beginning "The cock is crowing;" the boy recites Frank Dempster Sherman's "Anemone"
- 2 Reading of the Arbor day law
- 3 Song
- 4 Superintendent's letter to school officers and teachers
- 5 Reading — Descriptions of forest scenes taken from various writers
- 6 Song
- 7 Superintendent's letter to the children of the public schools
- 8 *Recitation by five pupils — "Building of the birch canoe" from "Hiawatha"
- 9 Song (patriotic)
- 10 Essay, "Woodland nymphs" (hamadryads, dryads, satyrs)
- 11 Essay on improving the school-yard — one of the pupils
- 12 Recitation — "The Building of the nest" - - - - - *Margaret E. Sangster*
- 13 Marching song
- 14 Planting of trees and shrubs
- 15 Closing song

* Let the first boy recite the lines beginning "Give me of your bark. O Birch tree. , second "Give me of your boughs, O Cedar!"; the third, "Give me of your roots. O Tamarack. , the fourth, "Give me of your balm O Fir tree!"; and the fifth, "Thus the birch canoe was builded."

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Bureau of Nature Study

ITHACA, N. Y.

Fellow teachers:

We want to make the school-grounds the most attractive instead of the dreariest spot in the country side, a place that will look well from the road and be the pride of the neighborhood, a picture that will be worthy to hang in the memory of every child in the district. What can we do to bring this about?

THE PLAN

First we must make a plan. We must try to imagine how the place will look when the plan has been carried out, when Mother Nature and Father Time have done their part. Our Arbor day holiday will be the best time, perhaps, to set the plan in operation, but it should be made long beforehand. Children, teacher and parents can help, and all the good suggestions will combine into a harmonious whole. Some teacher may be so unfortunate as to teach in a district where the school-house itself forms a part of the fence and has no yard whatever. In such a case the first step must be to secure the land for school purposes and that will be triumph enough for one year. Most of us are well supplied with our acre of ground, and can set to work with a free hand.

What better lesson in local geography can be devised than the making of a plan of the school yard? Some day for a drawing lesson let the children express their ideas of how they would like to have the school grounds look. They will enjoy drawing this

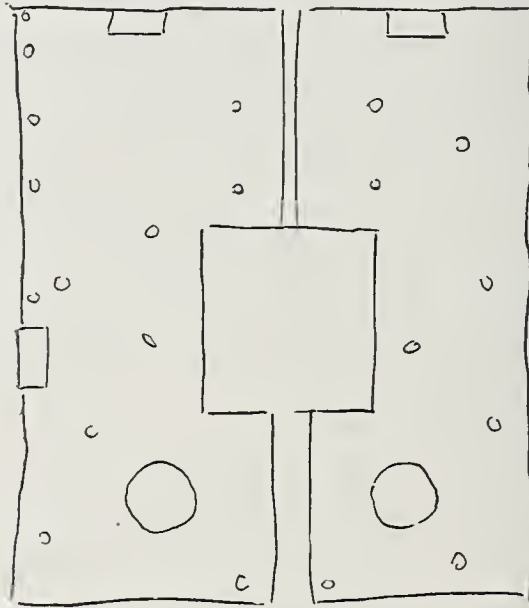


Fig. 1 Sketch plan made by girl ten years old. Large circles are flower beds. Small ones trees and shrubs

plan to scale and discussing together the various improvements. Such plans as figure 1 will probably be the result of the pupils' efforts. This little girl has given us some fine ideas. The row of trees will make a splendid wind-break and the boys can play marbles and "mumble-peg" in their shade. Some of the other trees and shrubs in this plan

will be in the way. A plant in the wrong place is about as bad as no plant at all. We do not wish to drive the boys into the street for their ball games, and we want room for all to play such games as "black-man." Then let us do most of our planting along the sides of the place and make a frame for our picture at the same time.

Figure 2 is a plan which combines the good suggestions made by children, teacher, and others. Our little girl's plan had a straight path to the door, at right angles to the road. Perhaps one of the boys said that he hadn't time to go the longest way round when he was in a hurry, and would like a path from each corner of the yard in front to

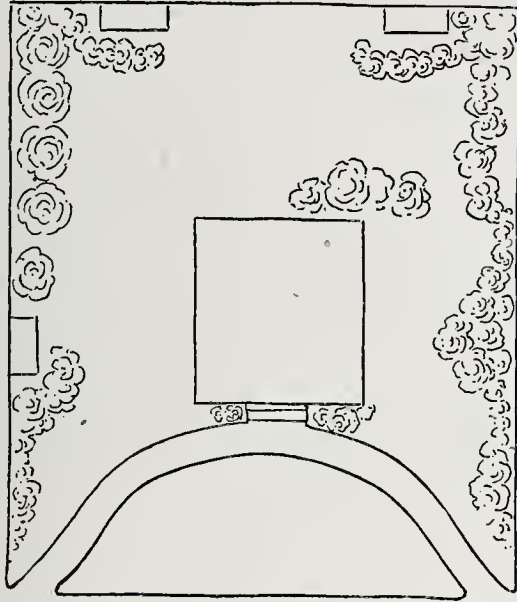


Fig. 2 Plan containing good suggestions from many sources

the door. Some older girl may have quoted "Curved is the line of beauty." All will be satisfied with a path like the one in figure 2, and a landscape gardener would approve their choice.

A copy of the plan should be kept for future reference. The next teacher will be glad to find it, drawn in ink, as a part of the equipment of the school.

How hard we shall have to work for that bit of lawn in the semi-circle between the road and the door! But grass we must have though some people will see many impossibilities in the very idea. Their croakings can best be silenced by showing them what determination and hard work will do. In a year or two they will not only be glad to own that they were mistaken, but will take as much pride in the school-yard lawn as if it had been their own idea.

The main parts of our little landscape picture are the central figure — the house itself, the fore-ground — its groups of lesser figures fringing the soft restfulness of the grass-plot, the back-ground — time will give us this if we plant well the trees near the house, and the frame — wide and irregular masses of green brightened by a low border of flowers.

The central figure. The school-house which has never belonged to anybody before, now becomes the property of every child who takes the smallest interest in improving its surroundings. What boy will injure his own property or that which he

shares equally with the rest? What girl will wantonly scribble on the clean wall of the school-house which has become an object of pride in her home? This spirit of ownership needs cultivating in many a child.

Our exterior improvements will have a reactionary effect on the interior. Old double desks will no longer be "good enough," broken black-boards will be replaced by new ones, and an air of comfort will soon pervade the place.

The fore-ground. It may be necessary to plow the space we intend for grass. Did any man owning a team and a plow ever refuse to plow a small piece of ground when asked to do so by his little daughter? Not if his advice had been previously asked as to the best kind of seed to be used for the lawn making! Some local seedsmen will tell us what variety of grass makes the best lawn in soil like ours. June-grass with a little white clover is a combination liked by many. Fifty pounds of June-grass seed and a pound or two of white clover seed will sow a whole acre. If the area is not too large it may be best to sod it instead of seeding.

The back-ground. We shall not want many trees near the house — only a dark group to bring out the central figure of our picture. Perhaps we will have a graceful elm, a maple, or two poplars and a pine. Low bushes grouped with the trees will look well there. Any suggestion of a straight row looks out of place except as a part of the border planting. Near the house an informal group is better.

The frame. The greatest amount of planting is to be thrown in at the sides, into the wide irregular frame, and here we can work out our individual tastes.

Let us start with the row of trees we found in the little girl's plan. They stand farthest from the center and mark the division line between us and our neighbor on that side. In front of them we will plant our favorite shrubs. I like sumacs, dogwoods, osiers, shad-bushes, witch-hazels, and thimble-berry bushes, from the woods, and flowering currants, lilacs, and flowering quinces, from the home garden. There is an endless variety of both wild and cultivated plants, and there is little danger of getting too many. We want a mass of deep, soft, mysterious green, and we must plant freely year after year until we get it. The teacher will find the advice of experienced patrons of the school most valuable in the selection of these plants.

The little girl who made the first plan will probably lament the loss of her two round flower beds. We can comfort her and make room for all her flowers by putting them in at the edge of the frame. There they will have meaning and will be a part of



Fig. 3 A picture in which the school-house is the central figure, surrounded by a frame of shrubbery the whole, while in the middle of the lawn they would be in the way, and would look lonesome and forlorn. In the front of the border they are to our big picture just what the silver beading is to the frames of the pictures on the walls at home. We will bring

the earliest spring flowers and plant them there. Instead of a few blossoms withering in a vase we can have violets, hepaticas, jack-in-the-pulpits, adder's-tongues, and wind-flowers all the spring, and asters and golden-rods in the fall. What hyacinths some of us can have, and tulips, "gay as a butterfly's wing!" We can put bleeding-heart, day-lillies, dahlias and rose bushes in the frame, too, and a tiger-lily in some corner where it will lighten the shadow cast by a dark pine. It takes two years to get holly-hocks from the seed, but how well they will look against a dark bank of shrubbery where the sun will catch their eye about half past two in the afternoon. Every child who has flower seeds or a plant of any kind to offer, shall have a place to put it and so help make the place and its beauty his own.

HOW TO CARRY OUT THE PLAN

We must begin this work by awakening an interest in it. We can best begin with the children. Their enthusiasm will be contagious and will so arouse their parents and friends that things will move on of themselves. I shall never forget how handsomely we were treated by the people of the district where I first observed Arbor day. They warmly seconded our efforts to improve the bare place and sent liberal contributions of the best things growing on their home grounds, for our planting. I have often wished that we had asked them to come and help us celebrate the day.

Planting trees. Many of us will have to begin at the beginning and strike the first spade into the unpromising soil of the school-yard. Trees should form the bulk of our planting if the place is entirely bare. Keep them away from the front and out of the playground. Select those which will thrive in your soil and will in the course of time produce the main features of the picture suggested by the plan. A row of maples, elms, pines or even willows along the fence will be a fine beginning.



Fig. 4 Transplanted tree, properly pruned and set
(From Bailey's "Garden-Making")

Trees should not be set in mere hollows cut in the sod, but in holes which should be deep and wide. The roots are the organs by means of which a plant obtains its food from the ground, and we must not neglect them in our planting. The holes should

be made large enough to receive the roots spread out naturally instead of matted together, and deep enough to set the tree a little lower than it was before transplanting. A tree that is to make its way in a new place needs special pruning. Look well to the roots. If the large ones have been roughly broken, the ends should be made smooth with a sharp knife. The digging of the tree necessarily breaks off many of the fine root fibers, and we shall have to cut away some of the branches in order to preserve the balance between the root and the top. Remember that a little root will not sustain a large top. Figure 4 shows a transplanted tree properly pruned and set.

Next in importance comes the filling of the hole after the tree is put into it. The finer and richer the soil, the better for the tree. Unless the delicate rootlets come into close contact with tiny particles of earth, the tree will suffer. After a quantity of soil has been crumbled and sprinkled around the roots, and packed down gently, the shovels can be used, and the soil tramped down. If the ground is very dry a pailful of water might be added when the hole is about filled. After each few shovelful of earth have been put in, the tree should be worked up and down slightly to settle it in its place.

The roots should never be allowed to dry, but should be kept buried in moist earth until time to plant the tree. Some of us will not find a rich fine soil to work with, and will have to use much ingenuity as well as time and labor if we hope to carry out our cherished plans. A school commissioner told me how, long ago, he taught where the school yard was a stony, barren, clay bank. He and his big boys took off their coats and with wheelbarrow and shovels they transferred the rich soil from the plank road to the great holes they had dug for their trees. He has lived to see those trees shelter the rising generation.

Let us think, then, what it means to plant a tree, and act accordingly. We have seen a tree set out with much ceremony and named after some great man, and have wondered why it sickened and died, never thinking that the cause was careless planting rather than any defect in the tree. Let us by all means honor our heroes by naming trees after them, but remember that ceremony alone is empty and will defeat the very end it was planned to accomplish. There is a lack of sincerity about it that will hardly escape the smallest child that takes part in it.

Planting the border. The ground for the border should be thoroughly plowed or spaded, and the same general rules given for the tree planting should be observed for the planting of shrubs. We can set the shrubs much more closely, two feet being about right for the smaller ones.

The border is to serve the double purpose of making a frame for our picture and of concealing the ugliness of outbuildings, which should by all means be hidden from the view of the passers-by and from the windows of the school-house. If there are pretty bits of landscape in sight we can plant so as not to shut them out. In one school yard is a wooden screen set up in front of the outhouse. Ten cents worth of morning-glory seed would work wonders there. A wild grape vine covers the coal-house on another school ground, and grows out over a frame at one end forming a bower beloved as a play-house by little girls. It possibly took twenty minutes to transplant that grape-vine!

To be really effective our Arbor day should last through the whole planting season. Some plants will do best if set out early, others can wait our convenience. There is many a boy who will be willing to stay after school to plant the bush, geranium slip, or flower seeds he had left over from his own garden. It will be more fun than staying after school for some other reasons we could mention!

No one need be discouraged because all this can not be done in one season. "Rome was not built in a day," but it was begun in a day and this is the year to begin, for many of us. Enthusiasm on the part of the teacher will be the moving spirit and there will be willing hands to support her efforts.

RANDOM SUGGESTIONS

Bulletins 160 and 121 of the experiment station at Cornell university, Ithaca N Y give valuable suggestions as to the planting of shrubbery, laying out of grounds etc. Leaflets 4, 12 and 13 issued by the bureau of nature study at the same place will awaken an interest in plant life. These are all free.

If there is a boy in the school who has a kodak, let him take pictures of the school grounds before the improvements are begun, then later when things are in full leaf, and then compare the two.



Fig. 5 "An informal flower border"

Many of the county agricultural societies of this state will this fall offer premiums for the best kept school grounds, and also for those which show the greatest improvement over former years.

Is there an old wooden fence on the premises? An "informal flower border like figure 5 will transform it. If there is a front fence, try the effect of some vines on it. Try bitter-sweet, Virginia-creeper, wild clematis, or honey suckles. Brick buildings suggest vines of the ivy kind.

Bird houses placed in the tree tops will tend to interest the pupils in bird life. Still greater interest will be aroused if the children make the houses.

Each little girl might have a bit of the border for her own flower bed, and be encouraged to plant and care for her favorite flowers.

The rounded path may be made of cinders, if nothing else is available. In some parts of the state tan-bark is to be had or gravel from the bed of a stream or from a convenient gravel bank.

Some schools are planning to have flower shows in October. They will exhibit flowers grown at home as well as on the school grounds. Many will have collections of insects, woods, and stones, as well as the flowers, to show their visitors. Photographs of trees, shrubs, and flowers growing on the grounds will add to the interest of this exhibit.

The best show window in the village is none too good a place to exhibit the plan for the improvements going on at the school house. All the citizens will want to take a look at it and lend a hand.

Have courage, faith, tact and enthusiasm, and success is sure!

MARY FARRAND ROGERS
Ithaca, N. Y.

Hiawatha's sailing

(BUILDING THE BIRCH CANOE)

' Give me of your bark, O Birch tree !
Of your yellow bark, O Birch tree !
Growing by the rushing river
Tall and stately in the valley '
I a light canoe will build me.
Build a swift Cheemaun for sailing,
That shall float upon the river,
Like a yellow leaf in autumn,
Like a yellow water lily !''

With his knife the tree he girdled ;
Just beneath the lowest branches,
Just above the roots he cut it,
Till the sap came oozing outward ;
Down the trunk, from top to bottom,
Sheer he cleft the bark asunder,
With a wooden wedge he raised it,
Stripped it from the trunk unbroken.

" Give me of your boughs, O Cedar !
Of your strong and pliant branches,
My canoe to make more steady,
Make more strong and firm beneath me !''

Through the summit of the Cedar
Went a sound, a cry of horror,
Went a murmur of resistance.
But it whispered bending downward,

" Take my boughs, O Hiawatha !''

Down he hewed the boughs of Cedar,
Shaped them straightway to a framework,
Like two bows he formed and shaped them,
Like two bended bows together.

" Give me of your roots, O Tamarack !
Of your fibrous roots, O Larch tree !
My canoe to bind together,
So to bind the ends together
That the water may not enter,
That the river may not wet me !''

And the Larch, with all its fibres,
Shivered in the air of morning,
Touched his forehead with its tassels,
Said with one long sigh of sorrow,
" Take them all, O Hiawatha !

From the earth he tore the fibres,
Tore the tough roots of the Larch tree,
Closely sewed the bark together.
Bound it closely to the framework.

" Give me of your balm, O Fir tree !
Of your balsam and your resin,
So to close the seams together
That the water may not enter,
That the river may not wet me !''

And the Fir tree, tall and sombre,
Sobbed through all its robes of darkness,
Rattled like a shore with pebbles,
Answered wailing, answered weeping,
" Take my balm, O Hiawatha !''

And he took the tears of balsam,
Took the resin of the Fir tree,
Smeared therewith each seam and fissure,
Made each crevice safe from water.

* * * * *

Thus the birch canoe was builded
In the valley by the river,
In the bosom of the forest ;
And the forests life was in it,
All its mystery and its magic,
All the lightness of the birch tree,
All the toughness of the cedar,
All the larch's supple sinews ;
And it floated on the river
Like a yellow leaf in autumn,
Like a yellow water lily.

—Longfellow's "Hiawatha."

The Building of the nest

They'll come again to the apple tree —
Robin and all the rest —
When the orchard branches are fair to see
In the snow of the blossoms dressed ;
And the prettiest thing in the world will be
The building of the nest.

Weaving it well so round and trim,
Hollowing it with care,
Nothing too far away for him,
Nothing for her too fair ;
Hanging it safe on the topmost limb —
Their castle in the air

Ah, mother bird, you'll have weary days
When the eggs are under your breast,
And your mate will fear for willful ways
When the wee ones leave the nest ;
But they'll find their wing in a glad amaze,
And God will see to the rest.

So come to the trees with all your train
When the apple blossoms blow ;
Through the April shimmer of sun and rain
Go flying to and fro ;
And sing to our hearts as we watch again
Your fairy building grow.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

Oriole

Hush! 'Tis he!

My oriole, my glance of summer fire,
Is come at last, and, ever on the watch,
Twitches the pack-thread I had lightly wound
About the bough to help his housekeeping —
Twitches and scouts by turns, blessing his luck,
Yet fearing one who laid it in his way,
Nor, more than wiser we in our affairs,
Divines the providence that hides and helps."

— Lowell.

A Laughing chorus

Oh, such a commotion under the ground
When March called, "Ho, there! ho!"
Such spreading of rootlets far and wide,
Such whispering to and fro.
And, "Are you ready?" the Snow-drop asked,
' 'Tis time to start, you know."
' Almost, my dear," the Scilla replied;
I'll follow as soon as you go."
Then "Ha! ha! ha!" a chorus came
Of laughter soft and low
From the millions of flowers under the ground —
Yes — millions — beginning to grow.

"I'll promise my blossoms," the Crocus said,
"When I hear the bluebirds sing."
And straight thereafter Narcissus cried,
"My silver and gold I'll bring."
"And ere they are dulled," another spoke,
"The Hyacinth bells shall ring,"
And the Violet only murmured, "I'm here,"
And sweet grew the air of spring.
Then "Ha! ha! ha!" a chorus came
Of laughter soft and low
From the millions of flowers under the ground —
Yes — millions — beginning to grow.

Oh, the pretty, brave things! through the coldest days
Imprisoned in walls of brown
They never lost heart though the blast shrieked loud,
And the sleet and the hail came down;
But patiently each wrought her beautiful dress,
Or fashioned her beautiful crown;
And now they are coming to brighten the world,
Still shadowed by winter's frown;
And well may they cheerily laugh, "Ha! ha!"
In a chorus soft and low,
The millions of flowers hid under the ground —
Yes — millions — beginning to grow.

— Emerson

Anemone

A sculptor is the Sun, I know,
Whose shining marble is the snow:
All through the winter, day by day,
He with his golden chisel-ray
Toils patiently that he may bring
A statue forth to honor Spring,
And when she comes, behold it there,—
A blossom in the gentle air,—
A form of gracious symmetry,—
A fragile white anemone.

— Frank Dempster Sherman.

The Oak-tree and the ivy

In the greenwood stood a mighty oak. So majestic was he that all who came that way paused to admire his strength and beauty, and all the other trees of the greenwood acknowledged him to be their monarch.

Now it came to pass that the ivy loved the oak-tree, and inclining her graceful tendrils where he stood, she crept about his feet and twined herself around his sturdy and knotted trunk. And the oak-tree pitied the ivy.

"Oho!" he cried, laughing boisterously, but good-naturedly,—"oho! so you love me, do you, little vine? Very well, then; play about my feet, and I will keep the storms from you and will tell you pretty stories about the clouds, the birds, and the stars."

The ivy marveled greatly at the strange stories the oak-tree told; they were stories the oak-tree heard from the wind that loitered about his lofty head and whispered to the leaves of his topmost branches. Sometimes the story was about the great ocean in the East, sometimes of the broad prairies in the West, sometimes of the ice-king who lived in the North, and sometimes of the flower-queen who dwelt in the South. Then, too, the moon told a story to the oak-tree every night,—or at least every night that she came to the greenwood, which was very often, for the greenwood is a very charming spot, as we all know. And the oak-tree repeated to the ivy every story the moon told and every song the stars sang.

"Pray, what are the winds saying now?" or "What song is that I hear?" the ivy would ask; and then the oak-tree would repeat the story or the song, and the ivy would listen in great wonderment.

Whenever the storms came, the oak-tree cried to the little ivy: "Cling close to me, and no harm shall befall you! See how strong I am; the tempest does not so much as stir me—I mock its fury!"

Then, seeing how strong and brave he was, the ivy hugged him closely; his brown, rugged breast protected her from every harm, and she was secure.

The years went by; how quickly they flew,—spring, summer, winter, and then again spring, summer, winter—ah, life is short in the greenwood as elsewhere! And now the ivy was no longer a weakly little vine to excite the pity of the passer-by. Her thousand beautiful arms had twined hither and thither about the oak, covering his brown and knotted trunk, shooting forth a bright, delicious foliage and stretching far up among his lower branches. Then the oak-tree's pity grew into a love for the ivy, and the ivy was filled with a great joy. And the oak-tree and the ivy were wed one June night, and there was a wonderful celebration in the greenwood; there was the most beautiful music, in which the pine-trees, the crickets, the katydids, the frogs, and the nightingales joined with pleasing harmony.

The oak-tree was always good and gentle to the ivy. "There's a storm coming over the hills," he would say. "The east wind tells me so; the swallows fly low in the air, and the sky is dark. Cling close to me, my beloved, no harm shall befall you."

Then, confidently and with an always-growing love, the ivy would cling more closely to the oak-tree, and no harm came to her.

"How good the oak-tree is to the ivy!" said the other trees of the greenwood. The ivy heard them, and she loved the oak-tree more and more. And, although the ivy was now the most umbrageous and luxuriant vine in all the greenwood; the oak-tree regarded her still as the tender little thing he had laughingly called to his feet that spring day, many years before,—the same little ivy he had told about the stars, the clouds, and the birds. And just as patiently as in those days he had told her of these things, he now repeated other tales the winds whispered to his topmost boughs,—tales of the ocean in the East, the prairies in the West, the ice-king in the North, and the flower queen in the South. Nestling upon his brave breast and in his stout arms, the ivy heard him tell these wondrous things, and she never wearied with the listening.

"How the oak-tree loves her!" said the ash. "The lazy vine has nought to do but to twine herself about the arrogant oak-tree and hear him tell his wondrous stories!"

The ivy heard the envious words, and they made her very sad; but she said nothing of them to the oak-tree, and that night the oak-tree rocked her to sleep as he repeated the lullaby a zephyr was singing to him.

"There is a storm coming over the hills," said the oak-tree one day. "The east wind tells me so; the swallows fly low in the air, and the sky is dark. Clasp me around about with thy dear arms, my beloved, and nestle close upon my bosom, and no harm shall befall thee."

"I have no fear," murmured the ivy; and she clasped her arms most closely about him and nestled unto his bosom.

The storm came over the hills and swept down upon the greenwood with deafening thunder and vivid lightning. The storm-king himself rode upon the blast; his horses breathed flames, and his chariot trailed through the air like a serpent of fire. The ash fell before the violence of the storm—

king's fury, and the cedars groaning fell, and the hemlocks and the pines, but the oak-tree alone quailed not.

"Oho!" cried the storm-king angrily, "the oak-tree does not bow to me, he does not tremble in my presence. Well, we shall see."

With that the storm-king hurled a mighty thunderbolt at the oak-tree, and the brave, strong monarch of the greenwood was riven. Then, with a shout of triumph, the storm-king rode away

"Dear oak tree, you are riven by the storm-king's thunderbolt!" cried the ivy, in anguish.

"Ay," said the oak-tree, feebly, "my end has come; see I am shattered and helpless."

"But I am unhurt," remonstrated the ivy, "and I will bind up your wounds and nurse you back to health and vigor."

And so it was that, although the oak-tree was ever afterward a riven and broken thing, the ivy concealed the scars upon his shattered form and covered his wounds all over with her soft foliage.

"I had hoped, dear one," she said, "to grow up to thy height, to live with thee among the clouds, and to hear the solemn voices thou didst hear. Thou wouldst have loved me better then?"

But the old oak-tree said: "Nay, nay, my beloved, I loved thee better as thou art, for with thy beauty and thy love thou comfortest mine age."

Then would the ivy tell quaint stories to the old and broken oak-tree,—stories she had learned from the crickets, the bees, the butterflies, and the mice when she was an humble little vine and played at the foot of the majestic oak-tree towering in the greenwood with no thought of the tiny shoot that crept toward him with her love. And these simple tales pleased the old and riven oak-tree; they were not as heroic as the tales the winds, the clouds, and the stars told, but they were far sweeter, for they were tales of contentment, of humility, of love.

So the old age of the oak-tree was grander than his youth.

And all who went through the greenwood paused to behold and admire the beauty of the oak-tree then; for about his seared and broken trunk the gentle vine had so entwined her graceful tendrils and spread her fair foliage, that one saw not the havoc of the years nor the ruin of the tempest, but only the glory of the oak-tree's age, which was the ivy's love and ministering.

—From *Eugene Field's "Profitable Tales"* by courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Bob White

There's a plump chap in a speckled coat,
And he sits on the zigzag rails remote,
Where he whistles at breezy, bracing morn,
When the buckwheat is ripe, and stacked the corn:

"Bob White! Bob White! Bob White!"

Is he hailing some comrade as blithe as he?
Now I wonder where Robert White can be!
O'er the billows of golden and amber grain
There is no one in sight—but hark again:

"Bob White! Bob White! Bob White!"

Ah! I see why he calls; in the stubble there
Hide his plump little wife and babies fair;
So contented is he, and so proud of the same,
That he wants all the world to know his name:
"Bob White! Bob White! Bob White!"

—George Cooper.

Selection

Little birds sit on the telegraph wires
And chitter and flitter, and fold their wings;
Maybe they think that for them and their sires,
Stretched always, on purpose, those wonderful
strings,
And perhaps the Thought that the world inspires,
Did plan for the birds, among other things.

Little things light on the lines of our lives,—
Hopes and joys and acts of to-day,
And we think that for these the Lord contrives,
Nor catch what the hidden lightnings say;
Yet, from end to end, His meaning arrives,
And His word runs, underneath, all the way.
—Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney.

The Catbird

He sits on a branch of yon blossoming tree,
This mad-cap cousin of Robin and Thrush,
And sings without ceasing the whole morning long
Now wild, now tender, the wayward song
That flows from his soft, gray, fluttering throat,
But often he stops in his sweetest note,
And shaking a flower from the blossoming bough,
Drawls out, ' Mi-eu, mi-ow ! "

—*Edith M Thomas.*

May

May shall make the world anew ;
Golden sun and silver dew,
Money minted in the sky,
Shall the earth's new garments buy.
May shall make the orchards bloom ;
And the blossoms' fine perfume
Shall set all the honey-bees
Murmuring among the trees.
May shall make the bud appear
Like a jewel, crystal clear,
'Mid the leaves upon the limb
Where the robin lilts his hymn.
May shall make the wild-flowers tell
Where the shining snowflakes fell,
Just as though each snowflake's heart,
By some secret, magic art,
Were transmuted to a flower
In the sunlight and the shower.
Is there such another, pray,
Wonder-making month as May ?

—*Frank Dempster Sherman.*

The Tree

The Tree's early leaf-buds were bursting their
brown ;
" Shall I take them away ? " said the Frost, sweep-
ing down.
" No, let them alone
Till the blossoms have grown,"
Prayed the Tree, while it trembled from rootlet to
crown.

The Tree bore its blossoms and all the birds sung
" Shall I take them away ? " said the Wind, as it
swung
" No, let them alone
Till the berries have grown."
Said the Tree, while its leaflets, quivering, hung

The Tree bore its fruit in the midsummer glow :
Said the girl, " May I gather thy sweet berries now ? "
" Yes, all thou canst see
Take them ; all are for thee,"
Said the Tree, while it bent its laden boughs low

—*Björnstjerne Björnson*

Selection

The cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun ;
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest ;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising,
There are forty feeding like one!

Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill ;
The Ploughboy is whooping — anon — anon.
There's joy in the mountains ;
There's life in the fountains ;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing ;
The rain is over and gone!

— Wordsworth

Common flowers

Dear common flowers, like other common things,
Are oft unprized 'mid rare and costly bloom,
Yet half the beauty that the springtime brings
Dwells in thy lovely tint and sweet perfume ;
And over woody bank and grassy field
The joy of Nature's heart is all revealed.

We find them looking to the sunny sky,
So pure, so fair, untouched by worldly stain,
Sometimes unnoticed by the careless eye,
Yet mutely teaching o'er and o'er again
That God provides, though mortals may not heed,
The things that minister to the Spirit's need.

Why should they blossom by the dusty street,
Where men go to and fro to daily toil?
Why should they fringe the growing waving wheat?
They do not feed the tillers of the soil,
They do not clothe the children of the poor,
But spread their useless gold beside his door.

Ah, why should beauty such as theirs appear
If not to feed some longing of the soul?
The immortal part of our existence here,
The only lasting part, the future whole?
This is their mission in this world of ours,
Their use to men, those precious common flowers.

Her second thought

" You pretty apple blossoms,
Why do you fly away
Just when the spring is sweetest ?
We want you all to stay.
There's not a single flower
More beautiful than you.
O stay, because we love you,
The whole long summer through."

The apple-blossoms whispered,
Still sending down a shower:
" You darling little maiden,
We've bloomed our springtime hour.
If we too long should linger,
Our boughs would never hold
For all the little children
Big apples, red and gold."

The little maiden pondered
As, pink and pearly white,
Came showering the petals
Upon her ringlets bright.
She laughed and shook them lightly,
And then looked up to say :
" You sweetest apple-blossoms,
Be quick and fly away."

— Sydney Dayre.